

SWNA Neighborhood Association Reactivation Meeting – 10/20/16

On October 20th, 2016, members of the Southwest Neighborhood Association met at Butler Creek Elementary School to discuss the potential for reactivating the Neighborhood Association. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting. The meeting was facilitated by Aaron Abrams, Manager of the Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement for the City of Gresham. The meeting opened with an initial discussion of issues in the neighborhood and concluded with the election of a new Neighborhood Association board and the reactivation of the neighborhood.

Opening Discussion Topics

During the initial discussion, several topics were discussed by neighborhood members, including:

What form can a Neighborhood Association take? Can it be a 501 c 3 non profit or an independent body of some sort?

Aaron Abrams explained that Neighborhood Associations are independent organizations. The City will recognize any group that meets the requirements of the City's administrative procedures (available at www.greshamoregon.gov/neighborhoods). Neighborhood Associations can pursue official non-profit status if they would like, but that is an additional layer of paperwork and scrutiny from the State of Oregon. In addition, the City can accept tax deductible donations on behalf of NAs and will be providing Directors and Officers insurance for NA boards.

If a group in the neighborhood would like to form its own 501 c 3, that would be welcomed by the City. This group would not necessarily become the recognized NA, however, unless it followed the proper recognition procedures.

Meeting participants expressed an interest in investigating a 501 c 3 designation, but many stated that this should be a discussion taken on by a regular reactivated NA board.

How can Nextdoor be used to better communicate and organize the neighborhood. Can it be used instead of face to face meetings?

Many meeting participants expressed approval of using Nextdoor and wanted to see how it can better connect residents and neighbors. Southwest has had great success using Nextdoor and would like to see it continue. Some participants were interested in using Nextdoor to conduct NA business – holding votes for example. While using Nextdoor creatively was well supported, many in the room also stated that they wanted to ensure that face to face discussions were still part of the SWNA decision making process and urged the participants to retain the regular, in-person, member meeting process.

Why was the neighborhood declared inactive in the first place?

Several participants asked why the SWNA was declared inactive in the first place. Aaron Abrams explained that the previous board resigned, stating that they did not feel the City was

adequately supporting them. This meant that the City had to declare the SWNA inactive. Two previous board members were present to answer questions. They stated that the independent status of Neighborhood Associations left board members open to potential liability. The previous board issued a statement to this effect, which was distributed to the neighborhood via Nextdoor.

Aaron Abrams explained that the City was instituting a new program to provide Directors and Officers insurance to boards as a result of this issue.

Election

After a robust discussion, the meeting attendees decided to elect a new board and reactivate the SWNA.

President:

Suzan Wells ran unopposed for President and was elected by acclaim.

Vice President:

Gene Wilkenson, Nathan Skarphol, and Scott Betterly all ran for the position, and Gene Wilkenson received the most votes and was elected as Vice President.

Land Use Chair:

Steve Bennett and Carl Clinton ran for the position; and Steve Bennett received the most votes and was elected as Land Use Chair.

Secretary:

Veda Taylor ran unopposed for Secretary and was elected by acclaim.

Treasurer:

Keeley Heredia and Maggie Young ran for the position; and Keeley Heredia received the most votes and was elected Treasurer.

Meeting Close

The meeting was called to close after the election.